2006 Student Assessment Results

Minister's Report to Parents

NOVA SCOTIA
Education

Minister's Report to Parents

2006

* Nova Scotia student photos by Andrew Ranson

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2007. Nova Scotia Department of Education.

No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, or recording by any means including information storage and retrieval systems without obtaining written permission of the Nova Scotia government (Department of Education).

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Main entry under title.

Minister's report to parents 2006 : student assessment results / Nova Scotia. Department of Education.

ISBN: 1-55457-109-X

1. Academic achievement – Nova Scotia 2. Educational tests and measurements – Nova Scotia. I. Nova Scotia. Department of Education.

371.262–dc 22 2007

2007-05267/

NOVA SCOTIA

Minister's Message to Parents

Dear Parents,

It is a pleasure to release my 2006 Minister's Report to Parents. This annual report is part of my commitment to provide all parents, as well as the general public, with meaningful information about student achievement.

This year's report contains valuable provincial, national, and international assessment results for language arts, mathematics and science. We have added for the first time, results for French mathematics and advanced mathematics.

For the second consecutive year, we are reporting school-by-school results of the Elementary Literacy Assessment. We are also pleased to once again share with you stories highlighting some of the noteworthy successes our school boards have achieved through an array of innovative learning assessments.

The good news is that there has been improvement in some subject areas over the past school year. Our results in physics continue to improve year after year. There has been significant improvement in grade 6 with 88 percent of students meeting the provincial standard in writing. Our pass rate for Grade 12 English and English/ Communications is now over 80 percent.

While the improved results are welcome in these subject areas, we need to do better. We know that some of our students are not performing as well as they should in mathematics, reading, and writing. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are the foundation for success, and we will continue to focus resources to help students do better.

Our provincial assessments are essential as we work toward improving student learning. They also provide direction to staff on developing programs designed to improve student learning.

We want our students to graduate with the best possible preparation for their futures. We need your help. Student success does not rest entirely with the department. Public education is a shared responsibility. Government, school boards, teachers, parents and students all have a role to play.

Thank you for your support and your continued interest and involvement in your child's education. Working together, we will make a difference for all students in Nova Scotia.

Karen Casey

Honourable Karen Casey
Minister of Education

Contents

Introduction 1
Why Conduct Provincial Assessments? 1
What is the Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia? 3
What's New in This Year's Report? 4

Overview 5
The Assessments 5
How to Read the Graphs 6
How Our School System is Organized 7
Our Social Context 8
How Public Education is Funded 8

Summary of Assessment Results for Mathematics 9
Provincial Assessment 9
National Assessment 12
International Assessment 12

Summary of Assessment Results for Science 13
Provincial Assessment 13
National Assessment 14
International Assessment 15

Summary of Assessment Results for Language Arts 17
Provincial Assessment 17

Elementary Literacy Assessment 25
Background 25
Helping All Students Succeed 25
Working with Teachers 25
Sharing Responsibility 26
Supporting Students 26

School Results
Annapolis Valley Regional School Board 27
Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board 28
Chignecto Central Regional School Board 30
Conseil scolaire acadien provincial 32
Halifax Regional School Board 33
South Shore Regional School Board 36
Strait Regional School Board 37
Tri-County Regional School Board 38

Senior High School 39
National Assessment 41
International Assessment 41

Telling Our Stories—Nova Scotia School Boards **43**
Annapolis Valley Regional School Board 44
Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board 46
Chignecto-Central Regional School Board 48
Conseil scolaire acadien provincial 50
Halifax Regional School Board 52
South Shore Regional School Board 54
Strait Regional School Board 56
Tri-County Regional School Board 58

What's Coming Up in Next Year's Report? **61**
Early Elementary Mathematical Literacy Assessment 61
Early Language Literacy Assessment 61
Junior High Literacy Assessment 61
Programme for International Student Assessment 61
Progress in International Reading Literacy Study 61

Conclusion **63**

Introduction

Why Conduct Provincial Assessments?

Nova Scotia, in collaboration with the other Atlantic provinces, has participated in the development of the Atlantic Canada curriculum in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The Atlantic Canada curriculum is the prescribed curriculum for Nova Scotia schools. Nova Scotia teachers prepare their instructional plans and student learning opportunities from this Atlantic curriculum.

Provincial assessments are the means by which information is collected on student learning. They provide reliable information to students, parents, and teachers to celebrate strengths and to address areas needing improvement.

Provincial assessments treat all students in a fair and equitable way, holding them to the same standard of achievement. As well, provincial assessments afford all students the same opportunities to demonstrate how well they are prepared for future educational endeavours.

Provincial assessments help address many important questions about how our students are doing, how our system is performing, and what is needed for improvement.

Why does the department conduct provincial, national, and international assessments?

Assessments, administered in common across the province, provide a reliable picture of the state of education in Nova Scotia. Assessments, based on the Atlantic Canada curriculum, provide important information for informed education decision making—at all levels. Assessments help address important questions.

ACCOUNTABILITY: What are the results of our educational efforts? And how do we know?
Assessments provide reliable data.

DECISION-MAKING: On what basis can we make good educational decisions? What educational policies are required?
The department, school boards, and schools use data from assessments to make sound educational decisions.

PERFORMANCE: How well are students doing with what they are learning? How well are our students doing with the Atlantic Canada curriculum? And how do we know what areas require actions to improve system performance and student achievement?
Assessments provide the data required to address these questions.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: How do schools, school boards, and the department know which areas to focus on in teacher professional development?
Assessments are used to pinpoint professional learning needs.

CURRICULUM: How do we know when a new curriculum is working? How do we know what areas of the curriculum require revision? Improvement?
Assessments contribute to decisions in curriculum development.

INDICATORS: Are students being well prepared for the global community? How are our students performing in relation to students in other provinces and in other countries?
Students' provincial performance is assessed by the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program and national performance is assessed by the Program of International Student Achievement. Assessment data are good indicators of how well our students will succeed.

RESEARCH: Where do we get reliable information about factors that facilitate student achievement?
Assessment results correlated with other education data can identify best practices.

INFORMATION: How can the public find out how students in the province are doing?
Assessment results, such as those in the *Minister's Report to Parents,* provide the answer.

LEADERSHIP: If assessment is an integral part of the educational process, what example is the department setting?
By employing teachers to develop and mark these assessments, the department helps teachers to improve their own classroom assessment practices.

FEEDBACK: How do the results of assessments help teachers and students?
Teachers review the results of their students as they develop their instructional plans. Teachers use the information from assessments to assist students with their learning needs.

SUPPORT: Who are the students that need extra help? Which teachers will require support for these students? Where should funds be targeted?
Assessments give teachers detailed information about their students so that those who are experiencing difficulty can be supported.

What Is the Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia?

The Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia (PLANS) is the assessment program designed for Nova Scotia public schools. It includes provincial assessments for elementary, junior high, and senior high schools, as well as national and international assessments. PLANS, when fully implemented, will administer assessments in mathematical and language literacy in grades 3, 6, and 9 and examinations in senior high school.

Information from provincial assessments helps monitor the progress of students across the province. As well, results are used to evaluate the impact of actions taken to improve student learning and achievement. Results also help the department to focus its resources and develop effective educational policies.

PLANS, including assessments at grades 3, 6, and 9, in language and mathematical literacy (English and French), examinations in senior high school, and national and international assessments, costs less than one half of 1 percent of the public education budget.

Provincial Assessments Not New

- Provincial assessments have a long history in Nova Scotia. They began in the late 1800s. The first large-scale assessments, prepared by the Department of Education, were initiated in 1873 and continued into the 20th century.
- After a series of conferences in 1930, the various Departments of Education (with the exception of New Brunswick) and most educational institutions in the three Maritime provinces and Newfoundland agreed to set up a common examination board for the purpose of conducting examinations for students in grades 11 and 12 and, in Nova Scotia temporarily, in grade 10. In January 1931, the organization of the Common Examining Board (CEB) was set out by legislation. The examinations were administered in Nova Scotia into the 1970s.
- In the early 1970s, the Nova Scotia Department of Education decided to replace the CEB exams with instruments resembling standardized tests being administered in other provinces. This decision led to a contract with a private testing service and the development of the Nova Scotia Achievement Tests (NSAT). These tests were administered until 1996 in grades 9 and 12 in the areas of mathematics, reading, and science.
- The end of the NSAT, as a standardized test in Nova Scotia, coincided with a decision to develop Atlantic regional assessments in grades 3, 6, 9, and 12. The first regionally developed assessments were examinations. Regional examinations were first administered in 1996 in physics and chemistry. These examinations and others that followed in English language arts and biology were used by schools on a voluntary basis only.

- In the 1999–2000 school year, three examinations—English, English/Communications, and Chemistry—were implemented in Nova Scotia senior high schools. During the 2000–2001 school year, Biology and Physics examinations were added to the provincial assessment schedule.
- In the 2003–2004 school year, examinations in mathematics were introduced. During the first administration teachers were permitted to omit questions on topics that had not been covered in class. The department did not centrally mark any student booklets during this first year of administration.
- Currently, a new Nova Scotia Examinations (NSE) for the Canadian history requirement in senior high school is in development.

What's New in This Year's Report?

Last year's *Minister's Report to Parents* initiated some significant changes. A new format was presented with new assessment information and school-by-school results. In this year's report, parents get updated information from provincial, national, and international assessments. Results for mathematics examinations that were administered to Francophone students are new to this report. Also included are accounts from each of our school boards with photographs of students engaged in school activities.

The results from new assessment projects will be added to future reports.

Overview

The Assessments

In January and June 2006, senior high school students participated in Nova Scotia Examinations (NSE) in language arts, mathematics, and the sciences. NSE are provincial examinations designed to assess what students enrolled in these courses have learned. The results from the examinations counted for 30 percent of students' final marks.

In late September and early October 2006, a provincial assessment was administered to grade 6 students. The Elementary Literacy Assessment engaged students in a number of tasks so that they could demonstrate their reading and writing skills. The assessment, conducted in both English and French, identified students who were experiencing difficulty with reading and/or writing. Literacy Support Plans were developed for each of these students.

Fact: All provincial assessments are developed by Nova Scotia teachers.

In the spring of 2007 a new national assessment will be administered. The Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) replaces the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) as Canada's national assessment program. PCAP will assess 13-year-old students in mathematics, reading, and science. A summary of SAIP assessments is included in this year's report.

Fact: Nova Scotia participated in the development of PCAP.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a leading international assessment, is administered in countries participating in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). PISA was first administered in 2000 and then again in 2003 and 2006. This international assessment evaluates the mathematics, problem-solving, reading, and science skills of 15-year-old students. A summary of the 2000 and 2003 results are included in this report. Results for 2006 were not available in time for this year's *Minister's Report to Parents*.

How to Read the Graphs

The results in the graphs are presented as percentages, with the exception of the results for the international assessment. International results are presented as scale scores that provide a value for measuring student performance where 500 is the international average. Scale scores take into account variations that can occur in assessments from one year to another. Scale scores provide more precise and accurate results. Future provincial assessments will be presented as scale scores.

Fact:

Representative sample: A selection of students who have the same characteristics as the whole population of students. Sample student results are used to represent the results of the whole student population.

When comparing results for Nova Scotia Examinations, either from one year to the next or from one school board to another, simply looking at the height of the bars in each graph may be misleading. What may look like an improvement or decline in the results may not be statistically significant. This is because the results used to produce the graphs are based on a representative sample of students and therefore actually fall within certain statistical limits.

For example, in the graph below, a result of 62 percent in an examination may actually be a little higher or lower than 62 due to sampling error. In this example, let's consider that the sampling error is +/–2 percent. This would mean that the actual results are somewhere between 60 percent and 64 percent. Therefore, if a board averaged 60 percent and the provincial average was 62 percent, then there would be no statistical difference between the board and provincial results.

When interpreting the example, it would be wrong to say that the students in the board performed below the students in the province as a whole. Despite looking as if they had a lower result on the graph, students in the board could have performed as well as students in the province. It is noted throughout this report when results are statistically significantly different.

Fact:

- Error Band
The error bands in the graph indicate that the actual results fall within a range of 4 percent (2 percent above the average mark, and 2 percent below the average mark).

How Our School System Is Organized

There are seven regional anglophone school boards in Nova Scotia, which enrol 97.1 percent of all public school students. The provincial school board for Acadian/francophone students, known as the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), includes the remaining 2.9 percent of students. Nova Scotia's total public school population was 142 304 from primary to grade 12 during the 2005–2006 school year. Overall, it is anticipated that school enrolment will continue to decrease over the next few years. Children who are five years old on or before October 1 of the current school year are admitted to grade primary. Students must attend school until they are 16 years old.

Fact: In 2005–2006 the province had a teaching force of 9708, and an overall student/teacher full-time equivalent (FTE) ratio of 15.1:1.

AVRSB	Annapolis Valley Regional School Board
CBVRSB	Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board
CCRSB	Chignecto-Central Regional School Board
CSAP	Conseil scolaire acadien provincial
HRSB	Halifax Regional School Board
SSRSB	South Shore Regional School Board
SRSB	Strait Regional School Board
TCRSB	Tri-County Regional School Board

Our Social Context

Nova Scotia has a population of 934 405, with a higher rural population than the Canadian average. The annual population growth rate is below 1 percent, and immigration is low compared to the rest of Canada. About 10 percent of the population speaks both English and French or French only. Among the total population, 3.8 percent consists of visible minorities. Unemployment rates in Nova Scotia are typically above the Canadian average.

How Public Education Is Funded

In the last number of years, funding for school boards has increased, and student enrolments have declined as seen in the table below.

Year	Cost	Enrolment	Cost Per Student
2001–02	$927 164 581	154 476	$6002
2002–03	$950 337 370	151 862	$6258
2003–04	$998 708 900	148 700	$6716
2004–05	$1 031 434 239	146 370	$7047
2005–06	$1 087 879 800	143 321	$7591
2006–07	$1 150 135 800	139 964	$8217

Summary of Assessment Results for Mathematics

Provincial Assessment

The first administration of a new grade 3 assessment is scheduled for June 2007. The assessment will examine students' mathematical understanding. A school-by-school report on the results of this assessment will be published in next year's *Minister's Report to Parents*. As the Program of Learning Assessment in Nova Scotia continues to expand to other grade levels students who participate in the grade 3 assessment will be assessed again in grade 6 and grade 9.

At the end of each semester, January and June, 2006, the department administered Nova Scotia Examinations in mathematics and advanced mathematics in English and French. The examinations for each language group were different because they were designed to the specifications of the English and French mathematics curricula.

For the English mathematics examinations, the students' work was marked by their own teachers. Results were given to each student within days of the administration dates. Thereafter, examination booklets and related materials were returned to the Department of Education. The department selected a sample of student booklets, representing each school board, and these were marked by a panel of specialist mathematics teachers under the guidance of professional staff in the Evaluation Services Division.

The results contained in this report are below expectations for high school students. Mathematics examination results continue to be troubling. The provincial average was 39 percent for this examination, and the pass rate was 28 percent. Advanced mathematics results were better than those for mathematics, but not good. The provincial average for this examination was 51 percent with a pass rate of 52 percent.

Math results for 2006 compared to 2005 are not statistically significantly different. However, Advanced Mathematics results at 51 percent (2006) compared to 54 percent (2005) are significantly different.

Math Strategies in 2006

- Minimum time requirements have now been set for mathematics in grades primary to 8.
- Last year, over $1 million more was spent on professional development for math teachers.
- Grades 5 and 7 students have new math textbooks.

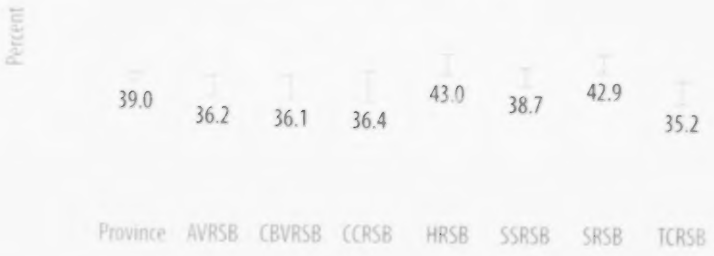
Facts:

Class marks account for 70 percent of students' final marks.

Examination marks account for the remaining 30 percent.

Fact: The highest mark was 95 percent and the lowest mark was 0 percent.

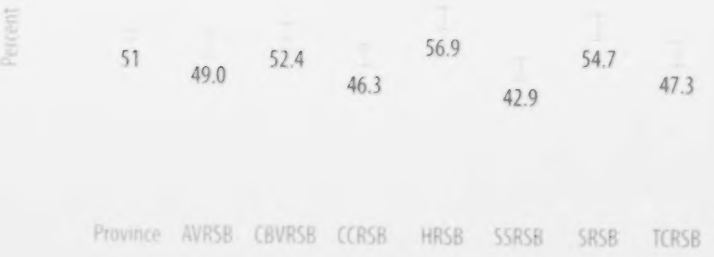
Provincial and Board Results for NSE Math, 2006 (English)



Facts: The highest mark was 97.5 percent and the lowest mark was 5.5 percent.

Of the 7876 students who wrote math and advanced math exams, 41 percent wrote the advanced math exam.

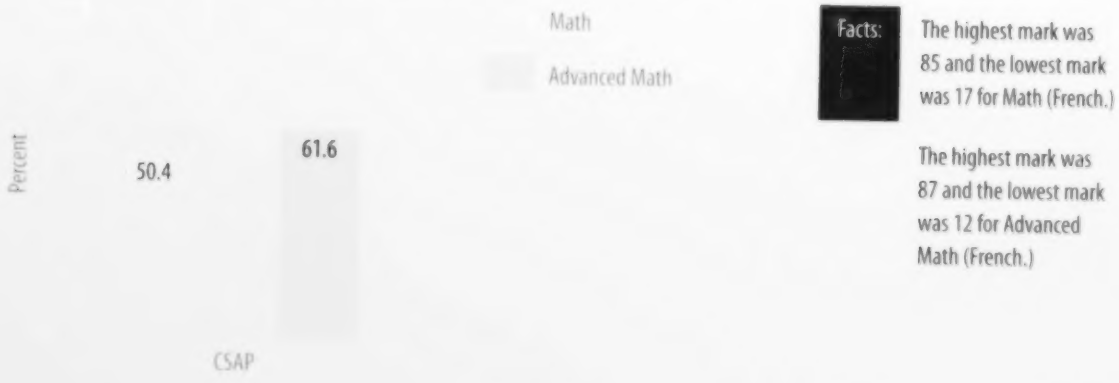
Provincial and Board Results for NSE Advanced Math, 2006 (English)



The mathematics examinations for francophone students were aligned to the requirements of the French mathematics and advanced mathematics curricula. Following the administration of each examination, students' booklets were immediately returned to the Department of Education. Unlike the sample of booklets marked for anglophone students, all francophone student booklets were marked by a team of mathematics specialists led by professional staff in the Evaluation Services Division. Within five days, the results for each student were returned to their respective schools in the CSAP school board.

The results for francophone students were also disappointing. The average for mathematics was 50.4 percent, and the percentage of students passing the examination was 54 percent. Advanced mathematics results were much better. The examination average was 61.6 percent and the percentage of students passing the examination was 77 percent.

Provincial and Board Results for NSE Math and NSE Advanced Math, 2006 (French)



Facts:

The highest mark was 85 and the lowest mark was 17 for Math (French.)

The highest mark was 87 and the lowest mark was 12 for Advanced Math (French.)

Examination results, valued at 30 percent are combined with class marks at 70 percent to obtain the final course average for each student.

National Assessment

There are no national assessment results for mathematics in this year's report. PCAP, the new national assessment program planned for 2007, will assess our students in mathematics. Results will be available in 2008.

In 1993, 1997, and 2001, our 13- and 16-year-old students participated in SAIP mathematics. The results were reported in previous editions of the *Minister's Report to Parents*. Nova Scotia's results began to slip below the national average in 2001 after previously performing at the Canadian average.

International Assessment

Fact: Nova Scotia students performed better in PISA than students in the majority of participating countries.

PISA was administered to a sample of 15-year-old students in the spring of 2006. While mathematics was included in the assessment, science was the major focus. The results for the mathematics portion of the assessment were not available at the time of publishing. New results for PISA 2006 mathematics will be published in a future edition of the *Minister's Report to Parents*.

PISA results for 2000 and 2003 were presented in a previous edition of the *Minister's Report to Parents*. Nova Scotia students performed above the international average, ahead of many countries, including Sweden, the United States, Ireland, and Germany. Nevertheless, Nova Scotia students performed below the Canadian average.

Summary of Assessment Results for Science

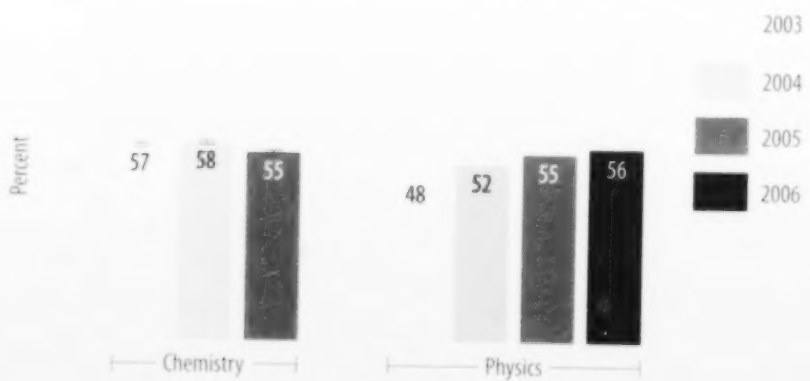
Provincial Assessment

There are no provincial assessments for science in elementary and junior high schools. In senior high school, Nova Scotia Examinations in science are administered on a rotational basis. Of the three science examinations available—biology, chemistry, and physics—physics was administered in January and June 2006.

As with other NSE, 50 percent is the requirement for students to pass each examination.

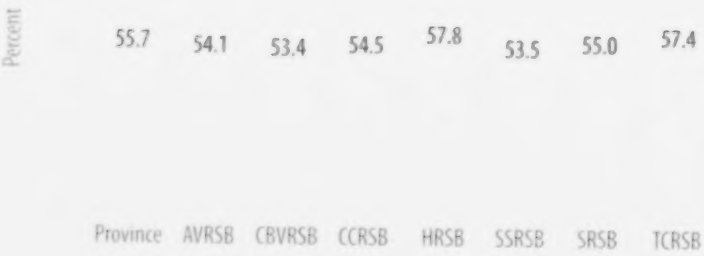
The graph that follows gives the average results for chemistry and physics examinations.

Provincial Examination Results for NSE Chemistry and NSE Physics 2003–2006



Fact: The results from the first chemistry and physics exams averaged 36 percent and 38 percent respectively in 1996.

Provincial and Board Results for NSE Physics 2006



Facts: The highest mark in Physics was 98 percent and the lowest mark was 9 percent.

Number of students writing the Physics exam: 1599.

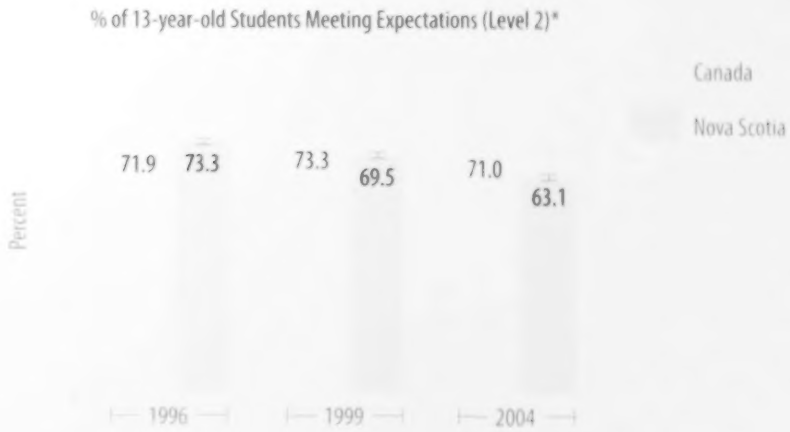
All physics exams were marked. Thus no error bands.

Overall, student performance in chemistry and physics have improved since the first administration of these examinations in 1996.

National Assessment

Fact: There are five achievement levels for SAIP. Level 5 is the highest level of achievement.

The SAIP science assessment was administered to 13- and 16-year-old Nova Scotia students in 1996, 1999, and 2004. The results for 2004 were presented in last year's *Minister's Report to Parents* and are summarized in the following graphs.



There was a statistical significance in the performance of our 13-year-old students in 2004. Their performance was below the average for Canadian students. The science results for PCAP, following the 2007 administration, are eagerly anticipated.

International Assessment

Three thousand three hundred and eight 15-year-old students in 118 schools participated in the spring 2006 administration of PISA. While PISA is designed to assess students in relation to mathematics, reading, and science, each administration has a concentrated focus on one subject area. In 2000 and 2003, reading and mathematics respectively were the primary focus for the international assessment. In 2006 the assessment focussed on science. Results of the most recent assessment will be available in December 2007.

The 2000 and 2003 results for science were presented in the 2005 edition of the *Minister's Report to Parents*. Nova Scotia science students performed better than students in the majority of countries in both years.

Nova Scotian students performed above the international average in science, but below the Canadian average. In 2000, no significant difference was observed between the achievement of boys and girls. However, in 2003 the performance of the boys was better than that of the girls.

Summary of Assessment Results for Language Arts

Provincial Assessment

In late September and early October 2006, the French and English Elementary Literacy Assessments were administered to students in grade 6. Individual student results were sent to schools in early February 2007. Schools initiated a review of the results and determined what needed to be done to further their students' learning. Parents/guardians also received a report for their children.

Some students were identified as being in need of additional supports/interventions. Once these students were identified, a Literacy Support Plan was developed at the students' schools in collaboration with teachers, parents/guardians, and students. Students who did not achieve at the provincial level of expectation in reading and/or writing receive ongoing help to improve their literacy skills.

The assessments were first administered in 2003. Students from the first administration reached grade 9 in the 2006–2007 school year. These students will participate in the first administration of the Junior High Literacy Assessment scheduled for May 2007.

The graphs on the following pages present the overall results for the last four years and the results for each school board.

>>

There was a statistical difference in students' reading and writing performance in 2006 compared to 2005. Although the improvement in writing was statistically significant, when the results for writing were broken out by type of writing task, students were found to be more proficient in story writing compared to persuasive letter writing, particularly in the area of organization.

The department continues to support teachers through professional development and by providing professional resources so that they can better assist students to improve their writing skills.

Facts:

Writing is evaluated in three areas: Ideas, Organization, and Matters of Correctness.

90 percent of students met expectations in story writing compared to 82 percent in letter writing.

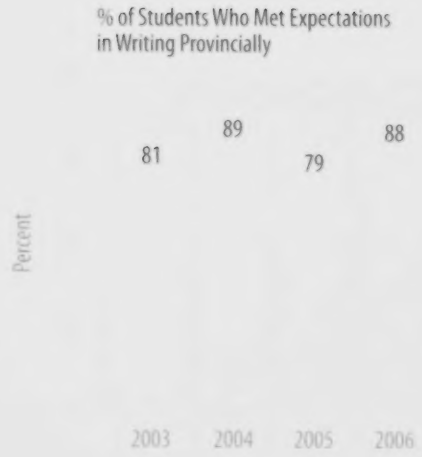
% of Students Who Met Expectations in both Reading and Writing Provincially

% of Students Who Met Expectations in Reading and Writing by Board in 2006

% of Students Who Met Expectations in Reading Provincially

% of Students Who Met Expectations in Reading by Board in 2006

Fact: 517 students out of total 10 291 were ineligible to participate in the assessment. These students had Individual Program Plans (IPP) in English Language Arts.



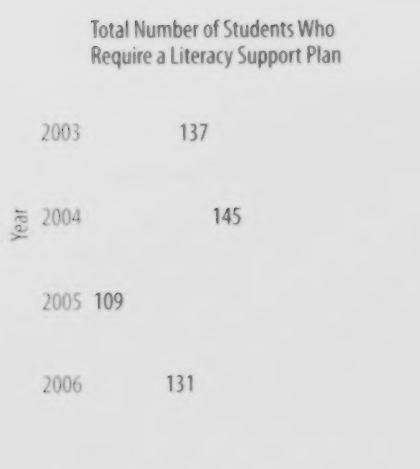
Facts:

In October 2006, 9854 grade 6 students wrote the Elementary Literacy Assessment.

Students performed better in writing than in reading.

>>

Students who met expectations in reading were the same for 2006 compared to 2005. These results have been consistent since the first administration of the assessment in 2003. Writing results have fluctuated from a high of 68 percent meeting expectations in 2005 to a low of 64 percent in 2004 and 2006.



It is important to note that elementary students in French and English have different curricula and different requirements in language arts. Therefore, the French and English assessments were not the same, and no comparisons can be made between the results for each linguistic group.

Caution must be exercised when comparing student performance year-over-year, and, even with four years of data, it might be premature to speak of trends in student performance. As with any new assessment initiative, it will take time to determine trends in student performance.

Fact: In September 2006, 331 students wrote the Elementary Literacy Assessment in French.

Elementary Literacy Assessment

Elementary Literacy Assessment

Background

The Elementary Literacy Assessment is part of the province's Learning for Life plan to ensure that young Nova Scotians have the literacy skills they need to succeed in school and in life. It was administered from September 25 to 28, 2006 (French), and October 10 to 13, 2006 (English). During the assessment, students read a variety of materials, including short stories, information texts, poems, and visual media texts, and answered questions based on those readings. Students were also required to write a letter suggesting a solution to a problem and were required to write a story in response to a prompt. The tables on the following pages show student performance in terms of not yet meeting, meeting, or exceeding the expectations for reading and writing.

Fact: 88 percent of French Immersion students (who wrote the assessment in English) met or exceeded expectations in reading and writing compared to 78 percent of the general student population.

Helping All Students Succeed

The assessment allowed grade 6 students in Nova Scotia to demonstrate how well they have learned selected reading and writing outcomes of the elementary language arts curriculum. The purpose of the assessment is to provide information about individual students' reading and writing skills, so that students who are in need of support/interventions in reading and writing can be given more support to help catch up. The Department of Education is building on its program of monitoring and supporting student progress with a Junior High Literacy Assessment to be administered this May.

Fact: 73 percent of males met or exceeded expectations in reading and writing compared to 83 percent of females.

Working With Teachers

The assessment was developed by the department's Evaluation Services Division with the help of grade 6 teachers and was field-tested in schools across Nova Scotia. The performance levels required in order for students to meet expectations were determined by teachers. The writing sections of the assessment were marked by a team of teachers under the direction of the Department of Education.

Literacy Success Strategy

- The Literacy Mentors program now has 15 full-time positions in grades primary to 9.
- Since 2000, more than 1.5 million books have been provided to schools to support literacy initiatives.
- Resources for schools include *Literacy Place* for grades primary–3 and *Units of Study for Teaching Writing Grades 3–5*.
- Resources for teachers include *Teaching in Action Grades Primary–3, Active Readers Assessment Resource: Supplementary Reading Passages Grades 4–6*; and *Passages: Instructional Passages for Active Young Readers Grades 4–6*.
- Thirty-seven resources were provided for each grade 7 classroom writing centre to support implementation of Writing in Action 7.

Sharing Responsibility

It should be remembered that, while literacy skills are developed in the school, they are also developed in the home, in the community, and in other areas of life, and are influenced by many factors. The results of the Elementary Literacy Assessment, therefore, should not be seen solely as a reflection of the students' teachers or schools, nor should the results be used to rank or compare schools.

Supporting Students

Providing individual and school-by-school results is part of the province's Learning for Life plan. The results give parents, teachers, school boards, and the Department of Education information to support all students, especially those who are in need of supports/interventions in reading and/or writing.

Parents and guardians have received their own children's results. Schools are contacting parents of students who did not yet meet expectations to discuss the results and ways to support these students. The support will continue in junior high.

As well, each school has its own students' results, which will help teachers, principals, parents and guardians, and others with plans for improving their schools. All partners will have results each year to measure progress and the impact of decisions designed to improve students' literacy skills.

The department will continue to work with its partners to help all students in Nova Scotia learn and grow to their full potential.

Note:

- Schools with six or fewer grade 6 students are not included in this report.
- Schools for which there is incomplete data are not included in this report.
- "Numbers of Students" does not include students with language arts individual program plans, students who were exempted, or students from whom there was insufficient evidence.
- French immersion students wrote the assessment in English.
- "Exceeds expectations" is a designation given to reading scores above 90 percent and writing scores that meet the criteria in all elements of writing in both writing tasks. This designation does not appear on individual student reports.
- Percentages in each section may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Annapolis Valley Regional School Board

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment • SCHOOL RESULTS

	Number of Students	Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Nova Scotia	9523	16	65	18	12	30	58
Annapolis Valley Regional School Board	1105	20	62	18	16	33	52
Annapolis East Elementary	80	13	63	25	16	41	43
Annapolis Royal Regional Academy	64	25	66	9	19	38	44
Berwick and District	42	21	55	24	14	24	62
Bridgetown Regional Elementary	39	15	69	15	15	44	41
Brooklyn District Elementary	59	19	69	12	5	41	54
Cambridge and District Elementary	26	23	58	19	19	38	42
Coldbrook and District	73	22	59	19	16	36	48
Dr. Arthur Hines	17	12	71	18	12	47	41
Evangeline Middle School	119	18	65	17	15	31	54
Falmouth District	34	15	68	18	12	29	59
Gaspereau Valley Elementary	20	35	55	10	30	35	35
Hantsport	12	42	42	17	42	42	17
Kings County Academy	55	25	58	16	27	20	53
L. E. Shaw Elementary	34	29	62	9	12	35	53
Lawrencetown Consolidated Elementary	27	30	44	26	22	41	37
Newport Station District	15	20	73	7	20	27	53
Northeast Kings Education Centre	103	31	55	14	26	32	42
Pine Ridge Middle School	156	13	69	19	7	31	62
Somerset and District Elementary	26	19	69	12	19	35	46
Three Mile Plains District	17	6	71	24	12	6	82
Windsor Elementary	39	26	59	15	13	23	64
Windsor Forks District	19	26	37	37	5	26	68
Wolfville	29	7	45	48	7	17	76

Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment - SCHOOL RESULTS

		Reading			Writing		
	Number of Students	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Nova Scotia	9618	16	65	18	12	30	58
Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board	1003	21	67	12	14	32	53
Baddeck Academy	44	21	68	12	9	26	65
Boularderie Elementary	14	0	93	7	29	50	21
Bras d'Or Elementary	28	18	71	11	16	34	50
Bridgeport	23	17	57	26	9	30	61
Brookland Elementary	29	17	62	21	9	37	54
Cape Smokey Elementary	17	35	65	0	12	41	47
Coxheath Elementary	29	7	65	27	7	16	76
Cusack-Cornwallis-Ashby Complex	59	27	58	15	13	33	55
Donkin-Gowrie Complex	29	24	65	12	24	35	41
Florence Elementary	25	36	60	4	20	24	56
George D. Lewis	6	33	67	0	33	0	67
Glace Bay Elementary	71	11	77	11	11	37	52
Greenfield Elementary	32	25	64	11	25	22	53
Harbourside Elementary	26	27	65	8	23	37	40
John Bernard Croak, V. C. Memorial	25	8	88	4	8	44	48
Jubilee Elementary	43	28	58	14	22	25	53
MacDonald Elementary (Dominion)	28	25	71	4	17	42	42
Mira Road Elementary	21	10	81	10	5	38	57
Mount Carmel Elementary	33	12	85	3	3	29	68
Mountainview-East Bay Complex	32	21	66	13	8	28	64
North Highlands Elementary	28	29	57	14	7	57	36
Rankin Memorial	10	10	60	30	10	40	50
Riverside Elementary	27	30	63	7	19	37	44
Robin Foote Elementary	36	22	53	25	11	39	50
Seton Elementary	18	11	72	17	6	38	57
Shipyard Elementary	34	35	56	9	35	32	32

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment - SCHOOL RESULTS							
		Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
St. Agnes Elementary		30	55	15	45	20	35
St. Anne's Elementary		19	73	8	8	39	53
St. Joseph Elementary (Sydney Mines)		21	74	6	0	41	59
St. Mary's-St Joseph's Complex		22	64	14	18	26	56
Sydney River Elementary		19	70	11	11	30	58
Tompkins Memorial		30	63	7	27	23	50

Chignecto-Central Regional School Board

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment • SCHOOL RESULTS

	Number of Students	Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Nova Scotia	9523	16	65	18	12	30	58
Chignecto Central Regional School Board	1741	18	64	18	13	30	57
A. G. Baillie Memorial	68	3	56	41	6	19	75
Acadia Street Elementary	21	19	52	29	5	29	67
Brookfield Elementary	23	35	52	13	39	35	26
Central Colchester Junior High	70	21	53	26	6	24	70
Cobequid District Elementary	15	20	60	20	7	53	40
Cumberland North Academy	52	17	73	10	25	35	40
Cyrus Eaton Elementary	17	12	71	18	12	35	53
Debert Elementary	19	26	63	11	11	26	63
Dr. W. A. MacLeod Elementary	31	19	58	23	16	29	55
East Stewiacke Elementary	33	12	79	9	30	36	33
F. H. MacDonald Elementary	76	28	58	14	21	34	45
G. R. Saunders Elementary	45	22	58	20	11	22	67
Hilden Elementary	17	18	71	12	6	47	47
Junction Road Elementary	25	28	52	20	24	32	44
Maitland District	10	10	70	20	30	30	40
North River Elementary	51	22	57	22	18	29	53
Northport Consolidated	14	0	79	21	0	50	50
Oxford Regional High	32	13	69	19	13	22	66
Parrsboro Regional Elementary	39	18	62	21	15	31	54
Pictou Academy-Dr. T. McCulloch Junior High	40	23	55	23	20	23	58
Rawdon District	21	14	81	5	10	43	48
Redcliff Middle School	186	11	72	18	6	25	69
River Hebert Elementary	18	50	44	6	22	33	44
River John Consolidated	14	7	57	36	14	36	50
Riverside Education Centre	179	17	67	16	15	32	53
Spring Street Academy	62	23	65	13	19	35	45

Chignecto-Central Regional School Board (Continued)

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment • **SCHOOL RESULTS**							
	Number of Students	Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Stewiacke Elementary	9	11	78	11	0	33	67
Tatamagouche Elementary	30	10	77	13	13	30	57
Temperance Street	20	40	45	15	10	50	40
Thorburn Consolidated	28	14	79	7	14	18	68
Trenton Middle School	41	20	61	20	10	32	59
Truro Junior High	134	14	69	17	11	35	54
Uniacke District	42	29	55	17	14	26	60
Upper Stewiacke Elementary	10	30	60	10	40	10	50
Wallace Consolidated	14	21	57	21	7	29	64
Walter Duggan Consolidated	68	10	68	22	10	21	69
West Colchester Consolidated	28	11	71	18	11	39	50
West End Memorial	20	20	65	15	20	25	55
West Highlands	33	21	70	9	15	39	45
West Pictou Consolidated	72	19	57	24	4	31	65

Conseil scolaire acadien provincial

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment • SCHOOL RESULTS

	Number of Students	Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Conseil scolaire acadien provincial	331	18	78	5	36	64	0
Centre Scolaire Étoile de L'Acadie	14	21	71	7	43	57	0
École acadienne de Pomquet	19	5	89	5	42	58	0
École acadienne de Truro	14	21	79	0	36	64	0
École Beaubassin	63	5	86	10	17	83	0
École Beau-Port	24	29	71	0	50	50	0
École Belleville	9	22	78	0	78	22	0
École Bois-Joli	57	11	81	9	28	72	0
École Jean-Marie-Gay	11	18	82	0	45	55	0
École Joseph-Dugas	17	24	71	6	41	59	0
École NDA	16	31	63	6	19	81	0
École Pubnico-Ouest	28	14	82	4	43	57	0
École Rose-des-Vents	15	7	93	0	40	60	0
École Stella-Maris	20	40	60	0	40	60	0
École Wedgeport	19	47	53	0	47	53	0

Halifax Regional School Board

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment - SCHOOL RESULTS

	Number of Students	Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Nova Scotia	9523	16	65	18	12	30	58
Halifax Regional School Board	3780	11	67	22	9	28	63
Admiral Westphal Elementary	20	25	65	10	15	50	35
Alderney	13	15	85	0	8	15	77
Ash-Lee Jefferson Elementary	89	4	72	24	4	19	76
Astral Drive Elementary	82	9	68	23	9	28	63
Atlantic View	22	0	73	27	5	27	68
Basinview Drive Community	63	5	75	21	5	24	71
Beaver Bank-Kinsac Elementary	44	11	75	14	11	48	41
Beaver Bank-Monarch Drive Elementary	37	8	62	30	8	22	70
Bedford South	59	10	63	27	8	25	66
Bel Ayr	37	8	68	24	3	30	68
Bell Park Academic Centre	44	20	64	16	14	34	52
Bicentennial	25	44	52	4	24	28	48
Brookhouse	47	19	66	15	17	26	57
Brookside Junior High	108	7	71	21	12	25	63
Burton Ettinger	45	20	56	24	16	33	51
Caldwell Road Elementary	49	4	69	27	2	16	82
Caudle Park Elementary	39	5	90	5	3	36	62
Cavalier Drive Elementary-Junior High	44	14	55	32	5	39	57
Central Spryfield	18	17	83	0	11	33	56
Chebucto Heights Elementary	46	9	74	17	9	43	48
Colby Village Elementary	28	0	79	21	0	14	86
Colonel John Stuart Elementary	23	9	83	9	4	22	74
Crichton Park	39	0	72	28	3	21	77
Duc d'Anville Elementary	53	23	51	26	13	30	57
Dutch Settlement Elementary	17	12	71	18	12	53	35
East St. Margaret's Elementary	11	9	73	18	0	55	45
Elizabeth Sutherland	23	30	61	9	4	57	39
Fairview Heights	52	10	69	21	4	44	52
George Bissett Elementary	33	15	61	24	24	27	48

Halifax Regional School Board (Continued)

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment • SCHOOL RESULTS

	Number of Students	Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Gertrude M. Parker Elementary	34	6	79	15	12	12	76
Grosvenor-Wentworth Park Elementary	48	8	54	38	6	21	73
Harbour View	30	20	73	7	17	27	57
Harrietsfield Elementary	27	26	67	7	19	30	52
Harry R. Hamilton Elementary	74	9	73	18	7	23	70
Hawthorn	30	7	57	37	3	17	80
Hillside Park Elementary	30	10	70	20	7	30	63
Holland Road Elementary	64	8	56	36	5	25	70
Humber Park Elementary	33	15	64	21	6	15	79
Ian Forsyth	42	2	71	26	5	36	60
Inglis Street	26	8	62	31	8	27	65
John MacNeil	29	21	62	17	7	45	48
John W. MacLeod-Fleming Tower	63	8	65	27	5	21	75
Joseph Giles Elementary	43	16	74	9	23	37	40
Joseph Howe	10	10	90	0	30	30	40
Kingswood Elementary	74	4	69	27	4	16	80
Lakeview Consolidated	57	14	65	21	12	35	53
LeMarchant-St. Thomas	40	0	50	50	5	13	83
Madeline Symonds Middle School	88	8	74	18	9	28	63
Michael Wallace	51	8	73	20	8	37	55
Millwood Elementary	63	11	76	13	5	35	60
Mount Edward	34	15	71	15	12	24	65
Musquodoboit Valley Education Centre	28	21	64	14	7	43	50
Nelson Whynder Elementary	12	58	33	8	25	58	17
O'Connell Drive Elementary	56	11	80	9	16	27	57
Oldfield Consolidated	17	12	59	29	6	29	65
Oxford	23	13	48	39	4	43	52
Park West	65	22	58	20	9	26	65
Portland Estates Elementary	57	4	49	47	7	18	75
R. Jamison-Jeddore-Lakeville	53	21	68	11	19	36	45
Ridgecliff Middle School	127	13	69	18	9	24	68

Halifax Regional School Board (Continued)

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment • SCHOOL RESULTS

	Number of Students	Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Robert K. Turner Elementary	28	21	54	25	14	39	46
Rockingham	43	2	63	35	5	19	77
Rockingstone Heights	16	6	81	13	0	38	63
Ross Road	37	8	76	16	5	27	68
Sackville Centennial Elementary	14	21	36	43	7	29	64
Sackville Heights Elementary	38	8	82	11	3	34	63
Saint Mary's	15	13	60	27	7	27	67
Sambro Elementary	16	0	75	25	0	31	69
Seaside Elementary	153	22	64	14	16	33	50
Shannon Park	49	6	59	35	12	14	73
Shatford Memorial Elementary	17	0	71	29	12	35	53
Sheet Harbour Consolidated	27	19	78	4	7	33	59
Sir Charles Tupper	47	0	64	36	2	21	77
Smokey Drive Elementary	52	0	71	29	2	23	75
South Woodside	16	13	69	19	13	19	69
Southdale-North Woodside	55	25	62	13	36	25	38
Springvale	23	4	74	22	0	30	70
St. Catherine's	47	23	53	23	23	30	47
St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay	19	37	58	5	0	26	74
St. Margaret's Bay Elementary	55	5	71	24	7	16	76
St. Patrick's-Alexandra	8	50	25	25	38	38	25
St. Stephen's	34	9	71	21	12	41	47
Sunnyside Elementary	69	4	59	36	3	25	72
Sycamore Lane Elementary	34	12	74	15	6	35	59
Tantallon Elementary	82	5	70	26	4	21	76
Upper Musquodoboit Consolidated	9	11	56	33	0	44	56
Waverley Memorial-L. C. Skerry	38	5	58	37	8	29	63
Westmount	40	10	53	38	3	38	60
William King Elementary	55	16	71	13	20	22	58

South Shore Regional School Board

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment • SCHOOL RESULTS

	Number of Students	Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Nova Scotia	9523	16	65	18	12	30	58
South Shore Regional School Board	570	20	65	16	11	31	58
Bayview Community School	45	13	53	33	9	16	76
Bridgewater Elementary	76	14	72	13	12	32	57
Centre Consolidated	43	21	67	12	5	33	63
Chester Area Middle	77	25	65	10	10	38	52
Dr. John C. Wickwire Academy	90	20	63	17	16	36	49
Greenfield Elementary	7	0	43	57	0	14	86
Hebbville Academy	68	19	69	12	16	28	56
Lunenburg Junior-Senior High	22	5	73	23	5	45	50
New Germany Elementary	43	26	67	7	7	37	56
New Ross Consolidated	23	39	48	13	4	26	70
North Queens Elementary	14	50	43	7	29	36	36
Pentz Elementary	10	0	80	20	0	20	80
Petite Riviere Elementary	8	25	50	25	0	38	63
Riverport and District Elementary	10	0	80	20	10	40	50
West Northfield Elementary	28	7	71	21	18	18	64

Strait Regional School Board

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment - SCHOOL RESULTS

	Number of Students	Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Nova Scotia	9523	16	65	18	12	30	58
Strait Regional School Board	549	19	63	18	12	36	53
Bayview Education Centre	38	5	71	24	3	34	63
Cape Breton Highlands Academy-Education Centre	31	29	61	10	19	35	45
Chedabucto Education-Guysborough Academy	21	19	76	5	10	57	33
E. Antigonish Education Centre-Academy	45	22	67	11	16	40	44
East Richmond Education Center	34	29	53	18	21	41	38
Fanning Education Centre	20	35	60	5	15	35	50
H. M. MacDonald Elementary	16	6	63	31	6	6	88
Inverness Education Centre-Academy	19	21	53	26	5	37	58
Mulgrave Memorial Education Centre	20	40	60	0	30	35	35
St. Andrew Junior School	136	8	65	26	4	31	65
St. Andrew's Consolidated	23	9	70	22	17	17	65
St. Mary's Education Centre	28	29	54	18	7	46	46
Tamarac Education Centre	64	23	61	16	20	30	50
West Richmond Education Centre	31	35	61	3	16	55	29
Whycocomagh Education Centre	17	6	71	24	12	41	47

Tri-County Regional School Board

2006 Elementary Literacy Assessment • SCHOOL RESULTS

	Number of Students	Reading			Writing		
		Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (%)	Meeting Expectations (%)	Exceeding Expectations (%)
Nova Scotia	9523	16	65	18	12	30	58
Tri-County Regional School Board	568	25	65	10	15	33	52
Arcadia Consolidated	38	34	58	8	21	24	55
Barton Consolidated	12	17	75	8	17	50	33
Cape Sable Island Elementary	32	38	56	6	9	41	50
Carleton Consolidated	19	11	79	11	16	21	63
Digby Elementary	60	25	63	12	15	35	50
Drumlin Heights Consolidated	18	11	83	6	22	33	44
Evelyn Richardson Memorial Elementary	31	16	77	6	16	35	48
Forest Ridge Academy	46	11	70	20	11	28	61
Hillcrest Academy	53	30	62	8	13	32	55
Islands Consolidated	9	11	89	0	11	22	67
Lockeport Elementary	15	27	67	7	13	47	40
Meadowfields Community School	75	16	69	15	8	29	63
Plymouth	24	38	58	4	21	33	46
Port Maitland Consolidated	36	33	67	0	17	44	39
South Centennial	23	52	43	4	17	57	26
Weymouth Consolidated	26	27	65	8	12	23	65
Yarmouth Central	45	22	60	18	22	29	49

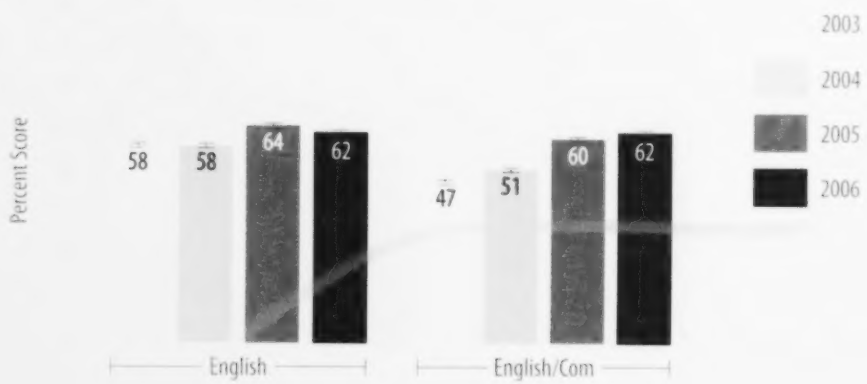
Senior High School

Significant improvement has been observed in the last few years in Nova Scotia Examinations (NSE) results for reading and writing.

The pass mark for NSE is 50 percent. The examinations count as 30 percent of students' final course marks. Class marks comprise the other 70 percent. The results presented below are for the provincial examination only. The graph shows the provincial results in both courses over the last few school years.

The overall average for NSE in English is not statistically different in 2006 compared to 2005. However, the pass rate has decreased by 2 percent compared to the previous year. Significant improvement is noted for students who were enrolled in English/Communications. The provincial average for this course has increased from 60 percent (with a pass rate of 81 percent) in 2005 to 62 percent (with a pass rate of 83 percent) in 2006.

Provincial Results for NSE English and NSE English/Communications

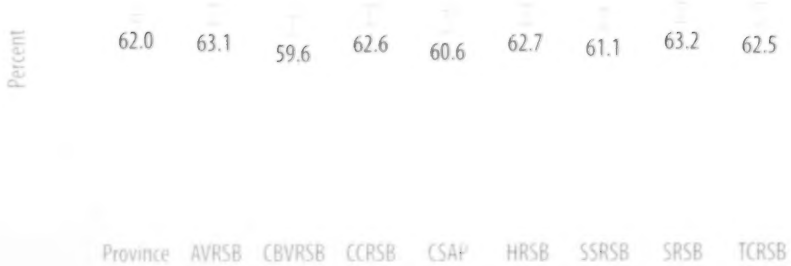


Provincial and Board Results for NSE English, 2006

Facts:

The provincial pass rate for English was 86.8 percent, with 10 058 students writing the exam.

The highest mark was 97 percent and the lowest mark was 13 percent.

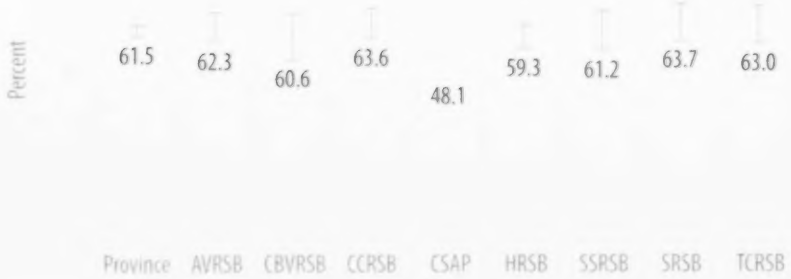


Provincial and Board Results for NSE English/Communication, 2006

Facts:

English/Communications examinations were written by 1951 students, with a pass rate of 82.8 percent.

The highest mark was 91 percent and the lowest mark was 17 percent.



National Assessment

There is no new information to report for language arts. The first administration of a new national assessment, the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), is scheduled for 2007. PCAP, replacing SAIP, will assess students in reading in May 2007.

International Assessment

The international assessment, PISA, was administered in the spring of 2006. The results will be presented in a future edition of the *Minister's Report to Parents*.

In 2000, 15-year-old students in Nova Scotia participated in the PISA reading assessment, along with students in other provinces and in 31 other countries. Canadian territories do not participate. Canada was one of the top-ranked countries in the assessment. PISA was readministered in the spring of 2003 with over 40 countries participating.

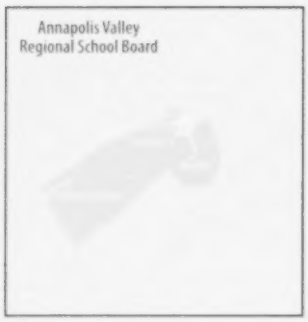
In both the 2000 and 2003 assessments, Nova Scotia did significantly better than the majority of participating countries. However, Nova Scotia did not perform as well as Canada as a whole.

The international assessment, PIRLS, was also administered in the spring of 2006. The results of this international reading assessment of grade 4 students will be reported in a future edition of the *Minister's Report to Parents*.

Fact: Nova Scotia was the site for marking PIRLS in Canada in 2006.

Telling Our Stories

ANNAPOLIS VALLEY
REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD



Assessments Increase Student Success in Valley Schools

To provide an appropriate assessment of students' academic achievement or a school's performance in general, educators use a variety of assessment tools. These assessments may differ in format and purpose, but they are all conducted with the same goal in mind—increasing student success in school.

In addition to the assessments conducted province-wide by the Department of Education, students, teachers, administrators, and consultants in the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board are involved in a variety of other ongoing assessments.

Our aim is to implement a balanced approach to assessment by using practices that are up-to-date, timely, consistent, and appropriate. As part of the New Teacher Support Program, educators in their first year of teaching participated in a full-day workshop on assessment principles and strategies. The board's detailed manual on *Student Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting Practices* was revised this year to better reflect current theory and best practices in educational assessment.

Assessment of the total school experience for students is also important. Building multi-year plans for improvement through the board's School Success Planning Division has been under way for several years. With the addition now of conducting internal reviews for the new provincial School Accreditation Program, assessment of all kinds has been brought to the forefront. Schools must gather and analyse many types of data on student achievement and school performance. This evidence is used to assess strengths and identify possible areas of improvement so that a school staff can set achievable and meaningful goals.

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve learning for students, who are the most important beneficiaries of the information obtained from quality assessment and evaluation practices. Good assessment advances learning and is crucial to the learning experience.

Paper-and-pencil testing is not the only form of classroom assessment in AVRSB schools. A visitor to any high school in the district will witness an array of assessments.

Performance assessments are conducted regularly in classrooms. In this approach to assessment, student mastery of expected learning outcomes is not evaluated solely by teachers, but is displayed for others to see and also evaluated by the students themselves.

In art classes, students exhibit their original work and create portfolios. In drama, dance, and music, students perform in public recitals. In film and video, students write and produce documentaries and animated short films to show to real audiences.

Students of French undergo an Oral Proficiency Interview as part of their summative evaluation. Physical education students complete FitnessGrams to measure their personal fitness progress throughout the year. In science classes, students conduct experiments that they design, and in social studies, they investigate current world issues to come up with original solutions. Students in technology education invent and build everything from rockets to go-carts. These assessments engage and motivate students, and at the same time help to build a more complete picture of how students are achieving in our schools.

CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA
REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD

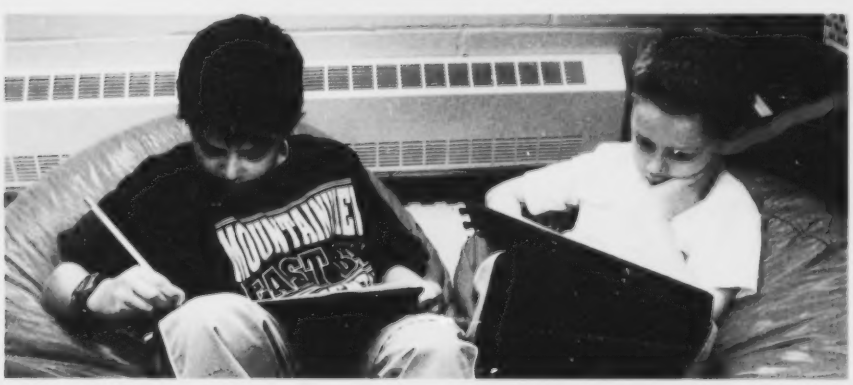
Linking Classroom-Based Assessment with Instruction

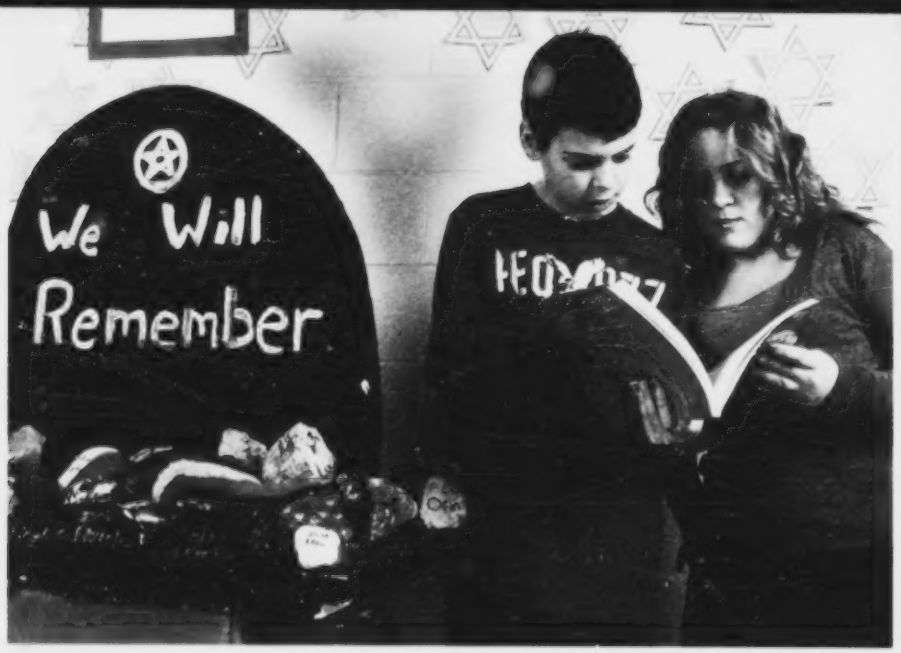
The Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board is working to make sure that classroom-based assessments match the instruction experienced by students in their classrooms.

The growth in using various instructional practices based on real-life situations has opened the door to a wider range of assessments that are designed to provide students and teachers with greater insights into learning and teaching. In keeping with advancing technology, one new approach involves digital media.

A group of 25 teachers has embarked on an electronic or e-Portfolio project with their grade 4, 5, and 6 students. An e-Portfolio is a digitized collection of samples of learning that include, but are not limited to tests, projects, performance tasks, photos, and artwork that represent who the student is, both personally and academically. It represents a student's accomplishments related to school or personal goals.

The e-Portfolio is based on an instructional model using approaches such as project- and product-based learning. It is, therefore, useful as an assessment tool because it enables students to view learning as a lifelong process. In addition to their year-end reports, students will have a record of their achievements saved to a compact disc.





Another approach is the use of an oral proficiency rubric to gain information on students' language skills. For example, Intensive French is a half-year, literacy-based alternative approach to learning French as a second language in grade 6. It is characterized by an increase in the time and intensity on language learning, the use of French as a means of meaningful communication, and a compaction of the curriculum.

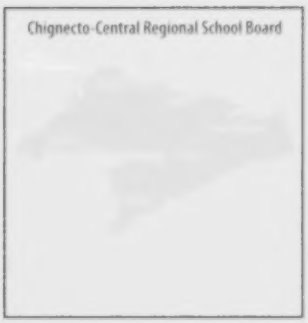
Students in this program are assessed by using the oral proficiency rubric, originally developed in New Brunswick. It consists of a pre- and post-oral interview plus a written test. The use of this assessment instrument has shown significant gains for students in their overall language skills, a key desired outcome of the program.

A third classroom-based assessment initiative enables students to learn about the atrocities resulting from social injustice around the globe.

Students participating in the recent Mountainview Elementary Holocaust Museum display and presentation learned about prejudice, racism, and social injustice. Their related classroom work ranged from a home project based on the hats that reflected different social and cultural backgrounds to the creation of "dream poems," which incorporated their imagined thoughts on what would make the world a better place.

Students were informally assessed during many group discussions and role-playing activities within the project. The range of activities also provided ample opportunities for teachers to formally assess the speaking, listening, writing, and representing strands of their language arts curriculum, in addition to key outcomes of the social studies curriculum.

CHIGNECTO-CENTRAL
REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD



Occupational Preparation Program Gives Hands-on Experience

OPP spells "Opportunity" for many teens attending high school in the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board.

The Occupational Preparation Program began as a pilot at Westville High School about 17 years ago. The program was making such a difference in the lives of the students enrolled in it, that it was extended throughout the entire board in the late 1990s. Today, OPP serves 316 students in six schools across the board.

The program combines academics with occupational skills training and on-the-job experience. The program provides an opportunity for students to develop proficiency in job-specific skills in addition to earning their high school diplomas.

"OPP was a great experience. I got more one-on-one help in small classes. I also got valuable hands-on experience in the shops, which I wouldn't have received in the regular high school program. The teachers were great. If it wasn't for OPP I wouldn't have graduated," said Melanie Hatton, Hants East Rural High School OPP graduate.

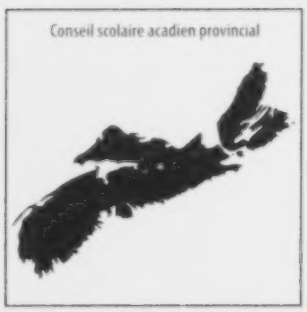
The program also incorporates "portfolio" learning into high school, with every student being required to present their career portfolio as a pre-requisite to attaining their OPP credential certificate.

"Many of our students are 'practical learners' who have become disengaged with the curriculum; OPP has re-engaged many of these learners through relevant hands-on learning experiences and community-based learning opportunities," said Cecil Smith, Vocational Technical Consultant.

Chad Neil, an OPP graduate from Cobequid Education Centre, has gone on to study culinary arts and hopes to share his skills and knowledge with other OPP students some day. "The patience and compassion of the teachers, the hands-on learning, and the work experiences have allowed me to achieve more than I ever thought was possible," said Neil.

Students study the regular high school curriculum, in addition to taking courses in a variety of areas, including Human Care (Child Care 11 and Elder Care 12), Auto Care, Forestry, Food Services, Property Service, and Retail. Students must also receive WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System) training, as well as other courses related to health and safety. Every OPP graduate leaves high school with a myriad of new skills in addition to their high school diploma.

CONSEIL SCOLAIRE ACADIEN PROVINCIAL



Pre-Primary Program Is Very Beneficial to the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial

When the Department of Education introduced its pre-primary pilot program in 19 schools in 2005, the members of the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial welcomed the initiative, having been active for a number of years requesting a program for four-year-olds. The benefits of helping students with their French before entering the primary program are very important to the CSAP.

The new program allows for four-year-old children to attend classes during the entire school day, five days per week, in preparation for primary classes the following year. About 60 percent of students arriving at the primary level in CSAP schools needed to improve their French language skills to get the most out of the primary program.

When the Department of Education launched pre-primary, two CSAP schools, Rose-des-Vents in Greenwood and Rive-Sud in Blockhouse, were included. Fifteen children registered at École Rose-des-Vents and 19 at Rive-Sud. The high number of children enrolling demonstrated the need for the program.

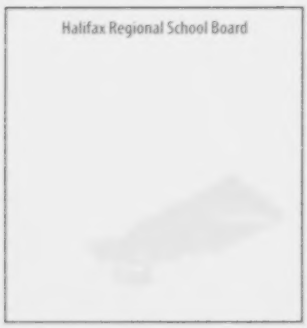
Based on the success so far, the board has approved three additional sites to participate in the program. These schools are École Wedgeport, École acadienne de Truro, and Centre scolaire Étoile de l'Acadie in Sydney.

"The benefits of the program are two-fold," explains Darrell Samson, Superintendant of the CSAP schools. "The program will, first of all, allow the children to have an enriching and rewarding experience in the French language. Secondly, it gives us an opportunity to better prepare them to enter the regular French program in grade primary."

Ken Gaudet, CSAP president, adds: "The pre-primary program for four-year-olds directly assists us in meeting our goal of offering quality programs in our schools, especially those children who have the most needs in the French language. We believe that it will allow us to recruit more students and to educate them in the French language at an early age."

The CSAP works closely with the Centre provincial de ressources préscolaires to develop activities for the program offered, according to Mr. Gaudet. "Our board will continue its efforts to promote the pre-primary program."

HALIFAX
REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD



Improvements in Reading Show Bright Future for Students

Ask an adult what makes a fluent reader, and they may say the ability to read the words on a page. Ask a grade 2 teacher with the Halifax Regional School Board, and the answer is not that simple.

Yes, reading means recognizing words and pronouncing them correctly, but how do children grow up to become the kind of readers who effortlessly devour books? How do they develop into readers who are free to contemplate the meaning of a book, to relate it to their own experience and to the world around them?

At the Halifax Regional School Board, teachers and program staff have worked diligently in recent years to instill in young children a lifelong love of reading. They have done it not by challenging their young students to sound out difficult words or by pushing them to read books that are a struggle, but by meeting each child at a comfortable reading level.

"Reading should not be a decoding activity," says Tammie Landry, the school board's Facilitator of Literacy Implementation. "Books should open children to all of the wonders contained on their pages, not become causes for anxiety."

The board's literacy assessments of grade 2 English students for the 2006–2007 school year show the efforts are paying dividends. More children are reading at or above their grade level, they are reading with expression, and they are connecting with what they have read.

Students demonstrated marked improvement in 7 out of 10 categories since the 2003–2004 assessments. They are reading with greater accuracy and fluency, and more of them are able to ask informed questions about what they have read.

"Reading should be fun and easy, leaving children free to think about the meaning," says Shannon LeBlanc, a school board consultant in literacy assessment and reporting. "We want our students, from the very beginning, to value reading and develop lifelong reading habits."

The renewed emphasis on early literacy within the Halifax Regional School Board was the result of a constellation of factors. Teachers were voicing concerns about struggling to meet the reading needs of students, the Reading Recovery™ program for grade 1 students was beginning to yield results and identify areas of need, and superintendent Carole Olsen had made a commitment to use data to answer vital questions about improving student achievement.

Teachers and program staff recognize that helping children raise their literacy levels means addressing the issue in the early school years.

Getting there has required more than a philosophical shift. It's meant investing in literacy co-ordinators, expanding Reading Recovery™ at the grade 1 level, and placing a greater emphasis on professional development for teachers.

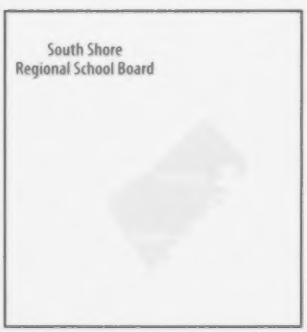
Assessments are key to the success of all these measures. They inform classroom instruction, provide valuable data for the board's program division, and become another means of communicating directly with parents.

Teachers work with students to determine individual "just right" texts. From there, they support children as they develop reading strategies, gain fluency, and acquire a love of reading that will last a lifetime.

Parents play a vital role as well. Nightly reading assignments provide parents an opportunity to hear their children read and to support and praise their children's reading development.

"The teaching happens at school, the practice happens at home," Landry says.

SOUTH SHORE
REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD



Using Assessment to Promote Learning

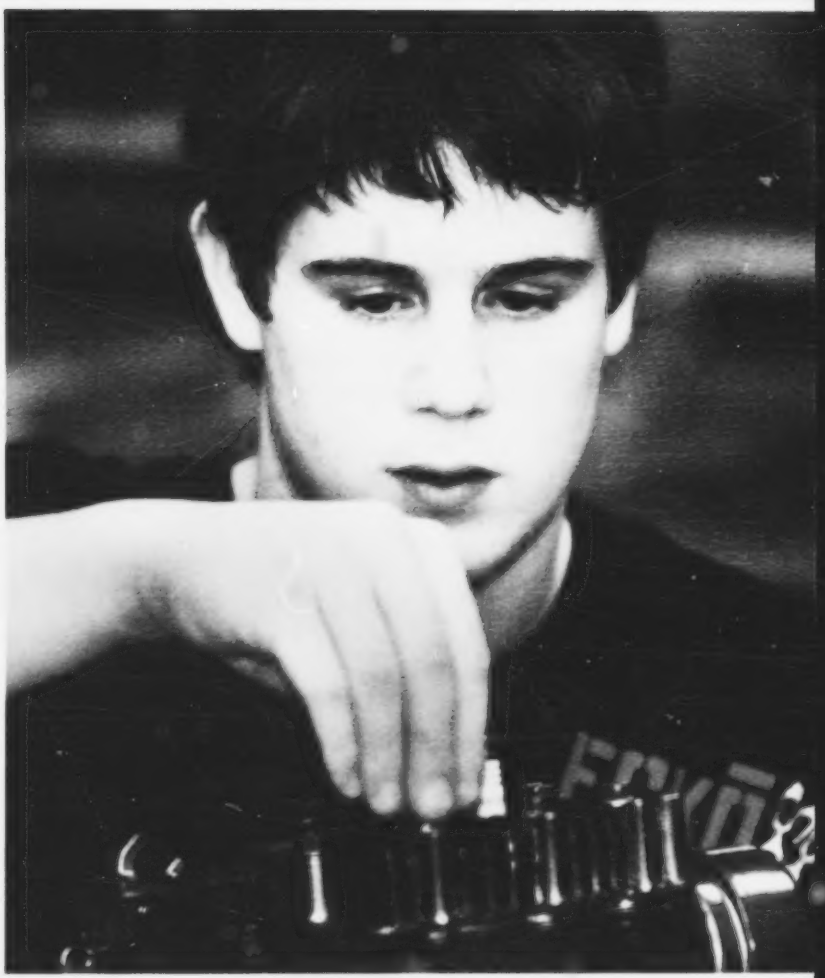
Kelsey is in grade 2. She and her classmates are doing "reading responses"—written summaries and reflections of a story they have read in class. Kelsey is reflecting on her own work, her response, and the connection she has made with the story. She has rated her satisfaction with her response by using either a smiley face, a face with neither a smile nor a frown, and a frowning face. She circles the face which best expresses her view of her own work.

Trevor and Amy are grade 9 classmates who have completed the first draft of a narrative prose piece. They share what they like and don't like about the narratives. They talk about what can be improved in a second draft—the detail of description, word choice, organization, the authenticity of dialogue, etc. As they begin their second drafts, they focus on improving the parts they each need to strengthen their writing.

These are glimpses of learning and teaching strategies practised in South Shore schools. Students use feedback from their teachers and peers, as well as their own self-evaluation to achieve learning outcomes. This approach makes continued learning the priority. Through adapting the work of many educational researchers, the lessons learned on improving student achievement are being actively applied in the South Shore.

Assessment for learning applies seven strategies:

- understanding the goals of a lesson
- using models of strong and weak work for comparison and to set personal goals
- offering descriptive feedback so students can tell what they are doing well and what needs improvement
- teaching self-assessment and keeping track of learning so students take ownership of their learning
- using mini-lessons to focus on one aspect of quality so that student needs can be addressed during instruction
- teaching focussed revision so students can refine their work, increasing its quality
- promoting self-reflection and knowledge sharing, providing a comfort zone with assessment and learning



Teachers have used some of these strategies for years. However, only in recent years has the research proving the effectiveness of these approaches been compiled and expanded upon. Teachers in the South Shore region are learning how to put these strategies into practice in their classrooms.

South Shore teachers began in-servicing on "assessment for learning" three years ago. By the end of this year, all schools will have staff trained in this approach. They, in turn, are helping their peers use "assessment for learning" in their classrooms, too. Now, in classrooms like Kelsey's, Trevor's, and Amy's, students are becoming more involved in their own learning and are working effectively with others, to understand the learning outcomes expected and to better set and achieve personal goals and standards.

"Assessment for learning" promotes further learning, self-awareness, and standard setting—the skills that students of today and tomorrow need to succeed and to continue to grow and learn.

STRAIT

REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD

Reading in Transition Assessment Celebrates Student Growth and Success

Students in grades primary to 3 throughout the Strait Region are benefitting from an informative, new assessment being used in language arts. The Reading in Transition assessment is a tool for recording, monitoring, and celebrating each student's success as their reading abilities develop.

To have a true picture of student progress, teachers assess students on a daily basis using a variety of methods. Some of the tools used to inform classroom instruction include checklists, portfolios, rubrics, and anecdotal records.

The Reading in Transition tool specifically assesses student progress in reading using a reading record. This record is administered in classrooms on a daily basis and forms an integral part of the overall assessment strategies used to monitor student progress. It not only provides immediate feedback to teachers regarding further instruction and next steps in student learning, but also supports the specific information provided to parents and guardians on the reading progress of their children.

In essence, by administering reading records teachers are able to quickly and easily assess the behaviours that readers exhibit as they are reading. These records also support the current reading strategies teachers use during the required one-hour block of time set aside for reading each day. Students are able to hone their skills as they take part in independent reading, shared reading, and guided reading times.

Tracking reading records is a valuable way to monitor the progress of students. To further support teachers, the Strait Regional School Board has developed an online tool that allows them to monitor and track reading levels over the course of the school year. At three specific times during the school year, teachers record the current reading level of each of their students online. To make this assessment more comprehensive, teachers also include anecdotal notes on students that provide further insight into a child's individual progress and record the level of comprehension achieved by the student. The data gathered can provide meaningful information for the school to use in the development of their school improvement plan.

There is no question that the Reading in Transition assessment is an innovative tool that helps teachers track each student's reading progress and celebrates student growth and success.

TRI-COUNTY
REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD

LifeWork Portfolios Work

Twelve-year-old Ryan LeBlanc already knows what he'd like to be when he grows up.

"When I am older I am hoping to become a scientist and I will try really hard to find a cure for cancer so more people can live longer and more people will be with their family and they hopefully will die of old age," says the St. Mary's Bay Academy grade 7 student.

Like many of his classmates, Ryan has been inspired to begin focussing on his future, thanks in large part to a new program that helps young students showcase their strengths and catalogue their academic achievements.

"In the future I would like to have a career in the medical area being a doctor," says Jocelynn Theriault, age 12." I also think it would be a good job for me because I would be able to work with people."

In 2005–2006 the school was chosen to pilot a new initiative for the grade 7 Personal Development and Relationships (PDR) course called the LifeWork Portfolio. The goal of the LifeWork Portfolio is to give students the opportunity to design and create personal portfolios that not only highlight the students' strengths and achievements, but their personal growth and experiences as they plan and develop pathways for a successful careers.

In creating and developing their portfolios, students will gather a selection of items throughout their years in secondary school. This resource will serve as a guiding link connecting a student's experiences to the world of lifelong learning and work.

Over the course of the entire school year, as part of the regular grade 7 PDR curriculum, each student created an online portfolio on the Department of Education server. Working on their portfolios gave students a chance to give serious thought to their skills and abilities, to do self-exploration through writing, and to hone their technological skills in the computer lab. In their portfolios, students created pages about biography, community involvements, school, and career interests. Some students, like Brandon Theriault, were able to identify possible career choices and even created links from their portfolios to training institutions in Atlantic Canada.

"My career choice is diesel and gas mechanic. To do that I'm going to study engines at a community college, says the 12-year-old.

The LifeWork Portfolio has proven to be a fun, engaging, and successful project for students. The LifeWork Portfolio is now a mandatory part of the PDR curriculum for all grade 7 students.

What's Coming Up in Next Year's Report?

Early Elementary Mathematical Literacy Assessment

An Early Elementary Mathematical Literacy Assessment will be administered in the spring of 2007. Grade 3 students will do the assessment, which is aligned to their elementary mathematics program. The assessment will give teachers information to assist their students in becoming mathematically literate, preparing them for success in the grade 4 mathematics program.

Early Language Literacy Assessment

The Early Language Literacy Assessment will be administered in the fall of the 2007–2008 school year. This assessment will determine how students are doing in reading, writing, and listening. The results of the assessment will be used to facilitate the development of students' language literacy skills.

Junior High Literacy Assessment

In the spring of 2007 a Junior High Literacy Assessment will be administered for the first time to grade 9 students. This is the same group of students that participated in the Elementary Literacy Assessment in 2003.

The Junior High Literacy Assessment will assess individual students in reading and writing. It will also provide teachers with information to support their students' learning.

Programme for International Student Assessment

Our 15-year-old students participated in the international assessment during the spring of 2006. Results from this mathematics, reading, and science assessment will be available for next year's report.

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

A sample of grade 4 students from across the province were selected to participate in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. The results of this international reading assessment will be released in December 2007 and will be included in next year's *Minister's Report to Parents*.

Conclusion

The Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia is expanding to provide parents more information about students and schools. Next year's *Minister's Report to Parents* will contain new results from the Early Elementary Mathematical Literacy Assessment, the Early Language Literacy Assessment, the Junior High Literacy Assessment, and the international assessments PISA and PIRLS.

There are areas where we have made improvements: writing in the elementary years, language arts and science in senior high school. There are other areas where there continue to be challenges: mathematics at all levels. There is much room for improvement to help our students succeed in their learning and achieve their goals.

Our mathematics strategy, to improve student achievement in mathematics at all grade levels, is well under way. We began targeting resources and focussing efforts at helping more students succeed in mathematics. We increased the amount of time spent on math, added math mentors and math leaders to support teachers in every board, increased course options at senior high, provided more learning resources, and gave teachers more professional learning opportunities.

Change, positive change, will take time. It will take time to get where we need to be, but we are making progress.

Our assessment results will continue to guide us—parents, teachers, school boards, the Department of Education, and the school community—in our efforts to improve our schools.

We are confident that our plan for education, Learning for Life, will help all of our students reach their full potential.

Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together is available at **www.EDnet.ns.ca**, and information on the Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia is available at **http://plans.EDnet.ns.ca**.

The *Minister's Report to Parents* is published each year to give parents reliable information about our students and their achievements. We look forward to expanding future reports to include more information for parents about the achievement of students and the performance of our education system.

For more information, please contact:

Public Schools Branch
Nova Scotia Department of Education
Box 578
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2S9